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## LOCAL NEWS HEADLINES

### Navy officials are willing to give land to ease traffic

*By Joe Baker/Daily News staff*

NEWPORT - Local Navy officials support turning over some land on West Main Road to develop a right turn lane on to Coddington Highway for southbound traffic.

Capt. Ruth Cooper, commanding officer of Naval Station Newport, told members of the reconstituted Naval Affairs Commission Monday that the Navy is willing to talk to the state Department of Transportation about land formerly occupied by the Navy Lodge for the turn lane. The hotel was torn down and the lot at the corner of West Main Road on Coddington Highway is now vacant.

"That's a very difficult property to put anything on," Cooper said. "It's a major intersection. We really want to incorporate some of that land as open green space. But using part of that in a Rhode Island DOT plan is probably the best use of the land."

Rep. Bruce J. Long, R-Middletown, told commission members that town officials support the plan but want it separated from DOT's plans to reconfigure Two Mile Corner. The Two Mile Corner project is at least four years from being started, Long said.

Cooper told commission members that the Navy would need a formal plan from DOT before it could be the process of turning over property. Commission co-chairman Rep. Joseph N. Amaral, R-Tiverton, said he would invite DOT members to attend the commission's next meeting in June.

The commission was resurrected in May at Amaral's insistence after being dormant for more than a decade. All members of the Newport County legislative delegation are members. Cooper and two other Navy officers are also members. A member from both the Newport City Council and the state Economic Development Council are also on the committee. Tracy D. Connors, a retired Navy captain who now lives in Tiverton, Patricia Hicks, of Portsmouth, and Jesse Bertholde, of Tiverton are also on the commission.

Cooper asked commission members to help the Navy with a bureaucratic stalemate regarding the Navy proposal to build a golf course on the west side of the island. The site is on about 368 acres of land where the former base tank farms were located. Because the property was once used for fuel storage the Navy is in the process of cleaning it up. It is expected the rest of the cleanup would cost about \$700,000. Part of the property, used as sludge pits in the past, is covered under federal Superfund regulations and is undergoing more extensive cleanup measures, Cooper said.

But the state Department of Environmental Management has told the Navy that because the property may be used for recreational activities the Superfund cleanup may have to be extended to cover the entire property, resulting in a \$5 million survey of the property to determine if the rest of the property needs the same level of attention, Cooper said.

"Quite frankly we don't have that (money) right now and it's a show-stopper for this project," Cooper said. "We don't want to circumvent any rules and regulations at all. But we also don't want to needlessly expend money."

John Riendeau, of the state Economic Development Council, said that DEM has different regulations for residential property and industrial property but has none specifically for recreational property. So, right now, it is trying to determine where the golf course proposal fits, he said.

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Amaral suggested the Navy get the formal support from the county's city and town councils and present those resolutions to DEM. Amaral said he would also call DEM officials to get an update on the project

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